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Permit to Burners Shows Health Not DEC's Aim

by Lynn Moorer

Dennis Grams has handed BioWaste Services, Inc. its permit because he said the medical waste incinerator proposed for Omaha adheres to all of Nebraska's air quality laws and regulations.

But citizens are concerned that the Department of Environmental Control director is not doing his job to protect the health and welfare of Nebraskans when he approved the Minnesota firm's permit October 17.

Pointing to state law, they contend that medical waste is hazardous waste and, as such, requires more stringent siting procedures. These procedures involve local citizen review and approval by the local governing body before a permit can be issued.

Four Omaha residents who filed suit against DEC attempting to halt issuance of a permit have been denied their request for a permanent injunction forbidding an incinerator at the proposed site at 506 Crown Point avenue. Charles Curtin, Dorothy Lanphier, John Pollack and Connie Shively have also been denied their request to amend their suit to include a writ of mandamus requiring Grams to perform his official duty to process BioWaste's permit application through hazardous waste procedures described in Nebraska law.

After allowing BioWaste to intervene, then dismissing the Omahans' suit September 28, Douglas County District Judge James Murphy is reported to have said that "he had no scientific background on the issue and that the court had no jurisdiction to interfere with a decision to be made by the state department." On October 5 Murphy denied a request for a new trial.

BioWaste has at least three months to cool its heels, however. On August 2, the City of Omaha placed a six-month moratorium on construction of medical waste incinerators saying examination of city rules and regulations governing air quality was needed. A city-county task force headed by Omaha environmental engineer and state Environmental Control Council chair Elwin Larson has been formed and is working on proposed regulations. Larson said he hopes to "achieve a consensus" on the task force for proposed regulations by February 1, 1990.

But Larson acknowledged a disagreement exists between the DEC and the City of Omaha as to whether local regulations can be more stringent than state air quality regulations which are widely considered to be lenient. "Another description of Ne-

braska's air quality standards is 'non-existent' " said Lanphier, spokesperson for Citizens Lobbying for Environmental Action in Nebraska. "DEC's present emission monitoring standards are clearly inadequate for safeguarding public health."

"But," said Lanphier, "Assistant City Attorney Allen Morrow looked at Nebraska law carefully and found that medical waste appears to fit within the definition of hazardous waste. The protections under hazardous waste law are much stronger. One reason is that local approval is required for siting a hazardous waste management facility."

Gary Bodnar, attorney for the four Omaha plaintiffs, agreed with Morrow. He said medical waste falls under the definition for hazardous waste in Nebraska law:

Hazardous waste shall mean a solid waste, or combination of solid wastes, which because of its quantity, concentration, or physical, chemical, or infectious characteristics may (a) cause or significantly contribute to an increase in mortality or an increase in serious irreversible, or incapacitating reversible, illness or (b) pose a substantial present or potential hazard to human or animal health or the environment when improperly treated, stored, transported, disposed of, or otherwise managed."

DEC Legal Division head Mike Linder disagreed that the medical waste BioWaste said it will incinerate fits into the hazardous waste definition. "It mentions 'infectious characteristics' but doesn't further define it in the characteristics chapter of Title 128 (DEC rules for hazardous waste)," said Linder.

"That definition is the same that's in RCRA (Resource Conservation and Recovery Act) -- the federal law. (When EPA originally promulgated rules for RCRA they had listed some infectious characteristic wastes...but then, due to public comment, withdrew that characteristic category," Linder said.

However, Lanphier said a 1986 publication, "An EPA Guide for Infectious Waste Management," includes Nebraska in a category of states "that have statutory authority to regulate infectious wastes as a hazardous waste but has not yet promulgated regulations."

According to Linder, "They've recently enacted a (federal) medical waste tracking

bill and...are trying to collect other information on whether infectious waste should be included in hazardous waste. The state tracks EPA at this point."

That's just the point, according to Bodnar. "If you parallel the definition of the medical waste tracking program and then look at the state definition of hazardous waste, they fit pretty neatly," Bodnar said. "The hazardous waste has a little bit definition but it still contains the elements that are present in the new medical waste tracking program. The federal program goes through a complete list -- all which have chemical and infectious characteristics -- like contaminated animal carcasses, syringes, used lab equipment, everything you can possibly imagine that's used in hospitals."

Linder said, "I think procedures we have established at this time are being followed. We haven't included any wastes within the hazardous waste -- the ACRA, Title 128 -- because we don't have data to show it is hazardous waste."

Lanphier noted that DEC did consider a cache of medical waste discovered in Omaha last July to be hazardous waste. Hazardous waste chief Ken Kolthoff said the materials would be treated as hazardous waste until proven otherwise.

"It's curious that DEC uses its authority to treat the medical waste as hazardous in that situation but refuses to treat BioWaste's proposed waste stream in the same manner," Lanphier said. "There are no assurances that the sealed waste containers BioWaste will burn won't contain hazardous waste. They have a fairly wide open permit with no restrictions as to where the waste can originate."

Lanphier rejected Grams' assertion that the proposed incinerator "adheres to all Nebraska's laws and regulations" and that he could not legally impose a moratorium on air permits. "Nebraska's air quality rules

and regulations give the director of DEC the authority to grant permits requiring 'design equipment, work practices, or operational standards' on a case-by-case basis which best protect our health and welfare," said Lanphier. "We citizens would like the State to do its job."

Bodnar said that state hazardous waste law requires:

1. Within 15 days after a permit application is filed, the DEC director must notify local officials to establish a site review committee for "early public involvement in the consideration of a proposed facility." The committee shall consist of six local members and six regional members and hold "fact-finding meetings near the proposed facility site." The applicant is to "make a technical advisor and other resource people" available to the committee and pay all committee expenses. The committee is to issue a report identifying and discussing issues and may include recommendations.

2. After the committee process, the applicant may file for a permit.

3. The local county board or city council shall receive a copy of the application once it is judged to be complete by the DEC director and the local governing body shall hold a public hearing within 45 days.

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Counter Press Club Ball This Friday Night

by Frances Mendenhall

It's not all hard work, this business of bringing you an alternate source of news. Right now, we are putting the final touches on our gala benefit, the Counter Press Club Ball, which we think will leave the Ak-Sar-Ben Coronation in the dust.

The most fun we've had has been the program we have ready for you this Friday (if you read this the day it's supposed to arrive in the mail, the Ball is tomorrow). Thanks largely to the wit of Ed Toohey, we have a collection of silliness that is guaranteed to keep you smiling.

A sample: Remember "Bye, Bye, Birdie?" This song is called "Bye, Bye, Wadman":

*No more staying up at night
Catching Howell at the light
Bye, bye, Wadman
Did the city want to fire?
Did the news say 'retire'?
Bye, bye, Wadman
Those at City Hall don't understand me
To think the coppers union
even panned me.
Herb Fittle sped me on his way
Twenty-five G's severance pay.
Wadman, bye, bye.*

(In case you missed the significance of that last line, see story on page 9 by Ernie Kubr.)

The Ball is guaranteed to be a good time, even aside from the fact that we depend on it to stay alive. This paper is brought to you by volunteers on an astonishingly low budget. Money is needed because: Many months have we fallen short of expenses. Then there are purchases we badly need to make, such as some modems, and postscript capabilities for our printer. Finally, we are convinced that if more people knew about us we could stay afloat by subscriptions alone, and to that end we have made plans to spend some money on outreach to potential new readers.

We also want to meet our readers. Many of you stay in touch one way or another, and

I suspect many others mean to but don't get around to it. The Ball is the perfect time to make contact.

So bring yourself and \$20 (\$30 per couple)



to Peony Park from 8 p.m. 'til 1 a.m. We will be so glad to see you. And think how good it will feel to support Nebraska's independent press.

Will They Ever Give Small Papers Some Respect?

The issue of whether some animals are more equal than others has once again been addressed by the Legislature. You may recall last March when our environmental editor Lynn Moorner was denied a permanent press credential with the Legislature. The clerk of the Legislature, Patrick O'Donnell, decided to grant Moorner a temporary pass--allowing her the same access as anyone else, but requiring her to seek a new pass each time she had a story to write. This decision was to be followed by the establishment of a written policy to be prepared in the summer.

So here's the policy being suggested by Mr. O'Donnell. Only those media that have

had a "regular on-going presence" be granted permanent press credentials and that two additional temporary passes be issued each day of the legislative session, one for the print media and one for the electronic media. Who has on-going presence? Round up the usual suspects starting with the World-Herald. Additionally, look for the Associated Press, United Press International, The Lincoln Star, Lincoln Journal, Nebraska Educational Television Network, KETV, KMTV, KOLN/KGIN-TV, WOWT, KHOS-TV and NTV News.

Two senators who have taken offense at this are Dennis Baack of Kimball and Ernie Chambers of Omaha. Baack sees a possibility that rural news coverage may suffer, while Chambers sees a danger in institutionalizing "those big-shot newspapers and television stations," while leaving other journalists to compete for the two remaining spaces. "That creates a dog fighting for a crumb," Chambers was quoted in the Lincoln Journal.

Chambers proposes relegating all media to the balcony, and Baack and Sen. Richard Peterson of Norfolk supported his proposal.

The executive committee has not reached a decision on this, but has appointed a subcommittee to study it further.

Has anybody complained that the Unicameral was too crowded by media people? Has any reporter behaved in an unprofessional way? Why should Nebraska not continue with its tradition of being among the most accessible of state legislatures? We are really not sure where the opposition is com-

ing from to the presence of reporters such as Lynn Moorner. While officially they have said they would use "on-going presence" as the criterion, many wonder whether Moorner's opposition to the nuclear waste dump is really the concern. The chair of the Resources Committee, Sen. Loran Schmit, has had nothing but support for Moorner's watchful presence in his committee meetings, and we certainly want her there.

Abort, Retry, Fail

Last week's earthquake left the San Francisco Chronicle without power.

Quite a pickle when you've a newspaper to get out.

What did they do? Well, USA Today said the reporters dumped their stories from their portable PCs to MACs at a location with power. Then the pages were run off on laser printers and sent out to be printed. The Chronicle put out a 16-page 2-section edition about four hours late.

Gosh, that's very like the way we publish the Observer!

Which just goes to prove what Quenton Crisp said -- "Why try to keep up with the Jones when it's so much easier to drag them down to your level?"

Seriously though, if the Humboldt fault ever eats the World-Herald's Atex pre-press system, we at the Observer would be happy to help out.

Observer Deadlines

The next issue of the Nebraska Observer will come out November 29. We must receive your story ideas by Nov. 14. Copy is due Nov 21. Story ideas for the January 3 issue are due Dec 18. Copy is due Dec. 21.

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If Hanson Boned Up On Anglo Anthropology

by Warren Francke

(With apologies to Tony Hillerman for borrowing very freely from the first chapter of "Talking God.")

Through the doorway which led from his secretary's office into his own, bearded James Hanson instantly noticed the box on his desk. It was bulky -- perhaps three feet long and almost as high.

The legend printed on it said it had originally contained a microwave oven manufactured by General Electric. Strips of brown tape had been wrapped erratically around it. It was a crude box, incongruous amid the tasteful artifacts in the stylish office of the director of the Nebraska State Historical Society.

"Where'd that come from?" Hanson asked, indicating the box.

"Federal Express," his secretary said. "I signed for it."

"Am I expecting anything?"

(Columnist's aside: Anyone who has read Hillerman's "Talking God," which begins thus with a Smithsonian official in Hanson's role, knows what's in the box. Anyone who has read Hanson's hostile arguments against return of Indian skeletons knows that he should expect what's in it.)

With his free hand, James Hanson was slicing the tape away with his letter opener. He pulled open the top flaps. Under them was a copy of the World-Herald, folded to expose the story that had quoted him. Part of it was circled in black:

"Historical Society Director:
Bones Belong to Me.
Return of Remains Assailed"

He picked up the newspaper. Under it, atop a sheet of brown wrapping paper, lay an envelope. His name had been written neatly on it.

While he read -- "Dear Mr. Hanson, You won't bury the bones of our ancestors because you say your right to study them outweighs any offense against our personal and religious beliefs" -- his chubby hand was pulling away the layer of wrapping paper which had separated the envelope from the contents of the box.

"Therefore I am sending you a couple of authentic skeletons of ancestors. I used scientific anthropological methods to locate the burials of authentic white anglo types...."

James Hanson's fingers were under the wrapping paper now, feeling dirt, feeling smooth, cold surfaces. He called out to his secretary. But his eyes moved to the end of the letter. It was signed, "Henry Highhawk of the Bitter Water People."

"What?" His secretary shouted. "What is it?"

She was standing beside him now. "There's bones in that box," she said. "All dirty, too."

The usually outspoken Nebraska Historical Society director silently put the letter on the desk and looked into the box. From underneath a clutter of what seemed to be arm and leg bones, a single empty eye socket stared back at him.

He noticed that his secretary had picked up the letter. He noticed dirt. Damp ugly little clods had scattered on the polished desk top.

"My God," his secretary said. "The names in the letter. Weren't they -- Aren't they your grandparents?"

Those Naked Savages

No, this scene didn't really take place, and one doesn't hope that director Hanson soon finds grandpa and grandma's bones on his desk.

One might hope for something like this from the Great Bone-Hugger and his Great Benefactor, Harold Andersen, noted newspaper publisher and member of Hanson's board of directors:

Hanson might quit dragging his feet and join the Smithsonian, which followed Hillerman's book by announcing a civilized policy for returning the remains of thousands of Native Americans.

Hanson might pay the \$19,500 lobbyist's fee proposed by his board from his own salary since he's the main reason the society needs lobbyists.

Andersen might order an editorial retracting the misleading one that complimented Hanson for his compromising approach to Legislative Bill 340, which, the AP story said, "seemingly resolved the Indian artifacts matter." It only seemed to resolve it because Hanson seemed to go along with it long enough to win false praise from the Herald and to prevent even stronger legislation.

Andersen might quit using his dual positions as newspaper boss and civic leader to both set civic policy and then applaud his policies in his newspaper.

And the Herald might quit running those county history cartoons portraying Indians

as naked savages.

Do the Photo-Op Hop

A brief recent history of the "photo opportunity" complaint:

One year ago -- oft-mentioned as the backbone of the Bush campaign, but disastrous when Dukakis tried it in a tank. We learned that not everyone looks good chopping horses and riding wood.

One month ago -- September version of this column urged readers to find collector's items, "any issue of the Herald without a picture of Gov. Kay Orr's latest photo opportunity."

Two weeks ago -- An Iowa Democrat labeled drug czar Bill Bennett's hippity-hop through his state, "photo-opportunity government." The Herald switched blame to Democrats in a Koterba cartoon treating Bennett as a busy tank commander in the drug war. But an editorial on the same page said this about his 20-minute Omaha quickie (just long enough to pose with Kay Orr):

"We wish Bennett's visit had been less of a whirlwind media event."

Translation: it was government by photo opportunity.

One week ago -- Vice President Dan Quayle popped in and out of the earthquake aftermath, and the San Francisco mayor complained that the visit was merely "a photo opportunity."

Meanwhile, when Washington Nebraskans honored Harold and Marian Andersen, guess who appeared in the photo next to the honorees? Not a Washingtonian. One clue: her initials also stand for "knock out."

Loss of Innocence

"What have we done to ourselves as a nation?" asked Sioux City Journal editor Cal Olson, when this happens:

The average Iowa farm woman, a nice person, finds the missing engine part from United flight 232. She phones her daughter, who hurries to the field with video camera and shoots the scene as her mother re-enacts finding the prize part.

The average Iowa farm woman not only picks up her big check for the part, but sells the video two or three times.

"We are losing our innocence," Olson said.

The most frequent point made by the editor and three Sioux City TV men on an Omaha Press Club panel focused on the arrogance and rudeness of the national press when it crowded in to cover the crash.

Don't Beg or Borrow Mine

Wonder about the roots of the advertising campaign that urges "Buy your own World-Herald"?

Check a November 1854 issue of the Omaha Arrow, our first newspaper. The editor chastised those who read his paper without buying their own copies. If you want the favor of the printer, they were warned, if you want business or seek office, step up and buy your own Arrow.

Herald Taste Test

The Herald set up a simple taste test on the editorial page: which do you prefer, the beautiful birds by our man Raimondi, or these ugly works by his elitist critics?

Sure, it was subtler than that, but how often do you see editorials full of name-calling and complete with comparative photos of art work?

On one hand, we had the Herald's hero, the Magnificent Raimondi, he of "Erma's Desire" (the spiky I-80 erection) and of the airport's "Dance of the Cranes" (representational enough -- "Them must be the wings, Maude" -- to satisfy a Public Pulse writer). The same Raimondi whose recent commission for Kearney State caused some Nebraskans to color with Green Envy.

On the other side, those same villains, those elitist critics, the likes of Ree Schonlau of Bemis fame, she who dared debunk Raimondi and then found Weird Harold's mocking finger pointed at a fuzzy photo of her own work as the editors seemed to scream, "You call *this* art?"

(Actually, it was an appealing piece, which I'm told she created 23 years ago as a virtual child. I don't suppose the Herald asked her which work she wanted to compete in their taste test.)

Of course, the editorial exhibit included some heavy metal from Sidney Buchanan, who might have known that Herald editors shared the artistic taste of former Mayor Al Veys, his first famous critic.

Peel back the layers of ironies like endless onion skins when you ponder this outburst.

My favorite irony is the obvious one: once much-maligned for "Erma's Desire" -- "What in the heck is THAT supposed to be?" -- Raimondi is now defended by some

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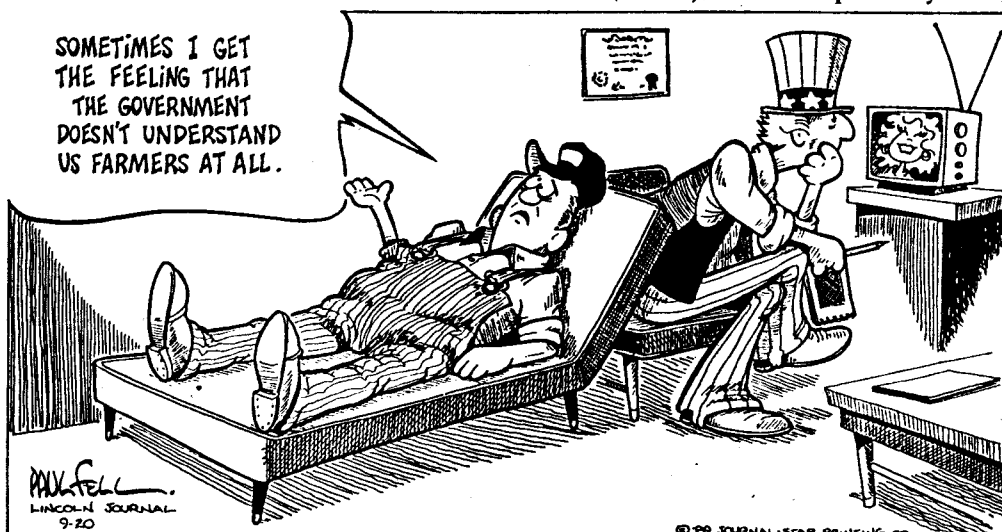


Trade Talks Threaten Environment, Small Farms

by Frances Mendenhall

Much of the information in the following article came from Mark Ritchie of the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy. Ritchie will present a seminar in Lincoln Oct. 30; see notice this page.

Must removing restrictions on international trade be accomplished at the expense of the environment?



Some in Canada fear that that is what happened last year as a result of the enactment of the U.S.-Canada Free Trade Agreement. Hailed by President Reagan as "an economic constitution for North America," the agreement also "entrenches energy and other resource policies that are fundamentally at odds with the policy directions endorsed by representatives of the countries at the global warming conference," according to Steven Shrybman of the Canadian Environmental Law Association.

The first effect of the deal already being observed by the Canadians has been a new round of energy mega-projects in Canada intended to serve U.S. markets. "Guaranteed access to Canada's energy resources will prolong the inefficient use of these non-renewable resources, forestall the imperative to concentrate on energy conservation and efficiency and significantly increase carbon emissions to the atmosphere," said Shrybman.

The U.S. Canada Trade Agreement was likewise disastrous for family farming, but since it contained goodies for so many other people, it was unstoppable in Congress.

Preemptive Rights Given to Market

What happened to Canadian oil and gas exploration should sound an alarm about the implications both for the environment and for the future of the family farm if the current GATT negotiations are enacted. What the negotiators seem to want is preemptive rights for the market to determine the course of agriculture and resource development free from government regulation. The way they are seeking it has placed health, safety, environmental, and agricultural policymak-

ing increasingly in the hands of unelected high-level trade negotiators and merchants. The first likely casualty will be farm programs.

GATT and World Trade

The rules that govern 90 percent of world trade among nearly 100 countries are set out in the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), which is presently being

renegotiated. Initially drafted in 1947, the GATT is periodically amended by complex negotiations that may span several years. The current round of negotiations, known as the Uruguay Round, started in October 1986 and will conclude in December 1990.

The result of those negotiations will be a comprehensive set of rules that will greatly influence global trade and economic activity for the next decade, a critical one for both family farming and the environment.

Yet the GATT is being negotiated with almost no consideration from either small-farm interests or environmentalists. Participation is restricted to large corporations and trade associations which pursue an agenda of economic growth, profit maximization, and deregulation.

The deals stuck under the GATT might have been called a treaty, rather than an agreement, in pre-Reagan years. This would have made it much harder for special interests to push it through, as a treaty carries with it the constitutional requirement of 2/3 approval by the Senate with possibilities for amendment. Now, as an agreement, the GATT will come back to both houses, cannot be amended, and requires only a simple majority.

The shroud of secrecy which surrounds trade negotiations allows these objectives to be advanced in private; policy is being made by unelected special interests.

Tariffication

The latest version of the U.S. agricultural proposal to the GATT, called *Discussion Paper on Tariffication*, has serious consequences for the environment and family farming. The plan contains four elements:

1) Phasing out of import restrictions by

converting all existing import regulations to fixed tariffs, and then phasing them out over time.

2) Subjecting of health, safety, and environmental standards to GATT trade rules and regulations, thus taking the regulatory power away from state and local government.

3) Prohibiting food-export restrictions, even in times of critical shortages.

4) Phasing out of other farm programs, including price supports and supply management.

Phasing Out Farm Programs

Families who are attempting to earn their living from farming and ranching will feel the greatest impact of tariffication. Some of the consequences include:

Falling Commodity Prices

As farm price supports are reduced or eliminated, and supply management programs abandoned, farm families will end up with less income. Ending quotas on commodities such as sugar would put U.S. beet and cane growers at a disadvantage, while creating enormous pressure to expand sugar production on ecologically sensitive land in the Third World.

Threats to Resource Protection

The current farm bill relies on supply management to enact such resource protection measures as sodbuster, swampbuster and other soil- and water-resource protection measures. Domestic supply management programs would become impossible to administer under tariffication. A great deal of land would be forced into production that would otherwise lie fallow as part of annual land set-aside programs. Land would be farmed much more intensively, using more chemicals and fertilizer.

Absentee Owners Could Replace Family Farmers

Under the U.S. proposal, it is likely that a large number of farm families will go out of business, even if they cut corners and intensify their operations. A number of smaller producers may be replaced by absentee owners who are much larger and more capital-rich, with the economic means to increase fertilizer and chemical use enough to survive under tariffication policies.

Diversified Livestock Producers Could Be Replaced by Large-Scale Feedlots

The reduction of feedgrain prices anticipated under this program will put large livestock producers, including cattle feedlots, hog confinement operations, dairy factories, and huge poultry operations, at an enormous competitive advantage over smaller, diversified family operations who grow their own feed. Not only will this squeeze out smaller producers, it will mean greater environmental problems caused by the run-off of manure from these huge operations, and a greater reliance on antibiotics. Large-scale producers are also the

major advocates of legalizing growth hormones and stimulants.

Prices For Non-Program Specialty Crops Will Be Undermined

Producers of traditional commodities, such as corn, wheat, and soybeans, may be forced to divert some or all of their land to growing crops such as apples, potatoes, and tomatoes. Many of the small farmers who now rely on the income they receive from "non-program" crops fear that the shifting of acres into these crops will create huge surpluses and ruin their prices.

Bovine Growth Hormone

GATT negotiator Carla Hills (of HUD fame) wants to change the rules to give a panel of scientists the final authority over what consumers must accept. Irked by decisions such as Europe's ban of the importation of beef fed with growth hormones, the U.S. has included as part of its GATT agenda the global harmonization of health and safety standards. One example is bovine growth hormone, now opposed by a consumer movement in the U.S. and Europe.

Corporations introduced the hormone into the dairy industry, and the U.S. presently allows its use and its presence in milk. The importation of dairy products without the hormone, desired by consumers, is seen as distorting non-tariff barriers and therefore subject to be overruled by scientists or trade negotiators. But the consumers see this as removing standard-setting processes to institutions that are less accountable to the community and more amenable to corporate influence and control.

What is happening in the GATT negotiations is clearly a case of short-term corporate gain taking precedence over long-term problems. The survival of U.S. food security based on the family farm, coupled with the preservation of earth's resources are both at stake. Although President Bush has made strong public pledges to protect the environment, it seems that his trade negotiators in Geneva share neither this concern nor a commitment to the family farm.

The Nebraska League of Rural Voters and other organizations are organizing to demand the resignation of Agricultural Secretary Clayton Yeutter. League literature describes Yeutter as "an advocate for the multinational processors and exporters of food, and almost always an adversary of the producer's and rural interests." A future Observer article will discuss their position.

GATT Leadership Training

Presented by Mark Ritchie

Airport Inn, Lincoln

1-5 p.m., October 30

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Public Welcome

For further information, call Linda Kleinschmit, 402-254-3310 (Hartington)

Birth of Atomic Bomb Set in Faustian Drama

A new movie about the people who created the first atomic bomb during World War II opened on Oct. 20. "Fat Man and Little Boy" was directed by Roland Jaffe and stars Paul Newman, an outspoken advocate of arms control, as the general who supervised the Manhattan Project.
by Rebecca Pressen

Roland Jaffe sees the Manhattan Project as a modern-day Faust story with physicist Robert Oppenheimer as the scholar who sells his soul and General Leslie Groves, the man who hired Oppenheimer, as the devil who bought it, Mephistopheles. The purchase price: the greatest prize in science.

Groves: There is a hitch; there are people out there who don't like the color of your politics.

Oppenheimer: My politics are an open book.

Groves: Well, I hope so. You'd win a war and a Nobel Prize.

"I think one of the things we've done is to restore a shadowy figure to a kind of front-line place in history, and that's the figure of General Groves," said co-writer and director Roland Jaffe, "who really, in other tellings of this story, has been treated as a kind of buffoon or sort of blockhead military organizer. In actual fact, Groves really was the genius behind almost all this project. In fact, I think you could say it was really Groves who was the father of the atomic bomb and Robert Oppenheimer who was the midwife."

In casting his leading role, Jaffe picked an unlikely pair. Although his star in "The Killing Fields," Sam Waterston, played Oppenheimer in a PBS series, Jaffe gave the role in "Fat Man and Little Boy" to a relative newcomer, Dwight Schultz, who looks much like the tall, handsome physicist. The role of the General, who cut through bureaucracy and procured nearly \$2 billion in two years for the Manhattan Project is being played by a man morally and physically the opposite of General Leslie Groves, Paul Newman. Why would the loose-limbed charmer from "Cool Hand Luke" and "The Sting," a man known for his anti-nuclear activism, want to play a 250-pound career military officer described as an uptight puritanical hawk?

Newman: "Cause he's a wonderful character. He's manipulative, and Machiavellian. Groves ordered an urgent and relentless, singleminded kind of discipline in a very disorganized, scattered group of people.

And in terms of what his goals were, he was very effective."

Newman -- and director Roland Jaffe -- feel that the bomb wouldn't have been built without Groves, and that fact has been largely ignored by history. "There is a liberal myth," says Jaffe, "that military men are fools." This he wants to refute. He also wants viewers to come out of "Fat Man and Little Boy" questioning America's motivation in dropping the bomb on Japan. Jaffe insists that the bomb did not hasten the end of the war as is often argued; it merely exhibited human cruelty in the pursuit of power. And even though Jaffe sees Groves as a sort of villain, he thinks this point isn't undermined by casting one of the most likeable stars in film history in the role.

Jaffe: The fact is, that if one likes to think of Groves as Mephistopheles, Mephistopheles is a figure of some attraction and power. It needs a man with strength of character, and Paul, I think, has done this wonderfully, to convey just who this man was.

Groves addressing the scientists at Los Alamos: Gotta come out of the clouds, gentlemen, and get into the business of winning the war. I'll say once -- I'm only gonna say it once -- for those of you who know, you know; for those of you who don't, you don't. You are not here to be comfortable. All right? You are here to go beyond the theoretical.

Newman says he doesn't agree with Roland Jaffe's assessment that Groves was a Mephistopheles, and he doesn't think Groves overwhelmed Oppenheimer.

Newman: No, I don't think he was his flunky. I think they balanced each other very well.

Dwight Schultz, the movie's Robert Oppenheimer: Robert Oppenheimer and Leslie Groves both wanted the same thing. They wanted to see this happen. You can't call someone who can

speak five languages, who can speak the language of physics in every detail, a man who brought together in two years, the power of the stars. He was not a flunky, no.

In the movie Oppenheimer expresses grave doubts about the bomb project after Germany surrenders.

Oppenheimer: Perhaps we can find some other use for this work. Fascism is dead.

Groves: You mean in Europe. What do you think the Japanese are doing, shooting squirrels?

Oppenheimer: No, they're not shooting squirrels, and that's not the issue.

Groves: What is the issue?

Oppenheimer: They don't have the technology. They're not capable of it. So if we don't need it, why make it?

These ideas, says actor Dwight Schultz, were not voiced by Robert Oppenheimer in 1949, but rather much later when he refused to endorse nuclear weapons. After all, it was Oppenheimer who said "it is a profound and necessary truth that the deep things in science are not found because they are useful, they are found because it is possible."

Having Oppenheimer address his res-

Continued on page 7

Thoughts on Nagasaki Meeting of Physicians for Social Responsibility

Janet Reuter, M.D.

The author, from Omaha, is a family practitioner and a member of Physicians for Social Responsibility since 1982. She recently attended the ninth annual conference of PSR's parent organization, the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan, Oct. 7 through 12.

There were two reasons for my trip to Japan. One was a desire to be connected to others who are working on problems related to the health, environmental, and economic consequences of

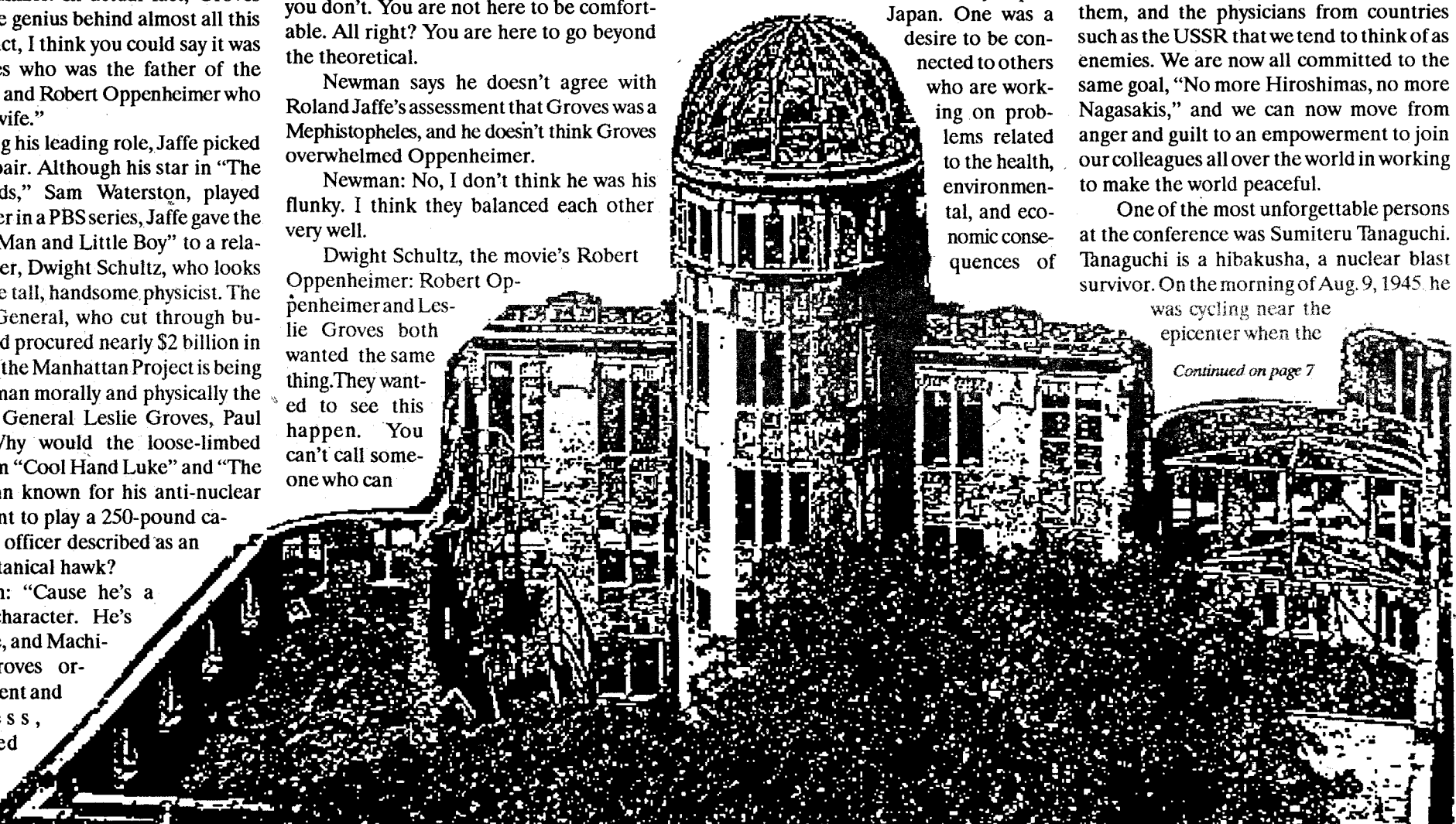
nuclear weapons production. I hoped to learn of strategies they had found useful, as well as to gain strength from their commitment.

The second reason I had for going was to make peace in my own heart for the atrocities of the bombs that my country dropped 44 years ago.

It turned out that both goals were realized in the same way -- by hearing the stories of the victims, the physicians who cared for them, and the physicians from countries such as the USSR that we tend to think of as enemies. We are now all committed to the same goal, "No more Hiroshimas, no more Nagasakis," and we can now move from anger and guilt to an empowerment to join our colleagues all over the world in working to make the world peaceful.

One of the most unforgettable persons at the conference was Sumiteru Tanaguchi. Tanaguchi is a hibakusha, a nuclear blast survivor. On the morning of Aug. 9, 1945, he was cycling near the epicenter when the

Continued on page 7



The A-Bomb Dome is a ruined structure that has become a symbol of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima. It was originally the Industrial Promotion Hall, built in 1915. The bomb's hypocenter was almost directly above this structure

Trade Exec Opposes Bottle Bill, Favors Recycling

by Colleen Aagesen

"A bottle bill is a quick fix, not a long-term solution," said Richard Abramowitz, manager of solid waste programs for the National Soft Drink Association, the Washington, D.C.-based trade organization of the soft drink industry.

Abramowitz, speaking at the annual conference of the Nebraska State Recycling Association and Nebraska Chapter of the Governmental Refuse Collection and Disposal Association in Lincoln Oct. 6, urged Nebraskans to craft an integrated, comprehensive waste-management program.

Abramowitz said his trade organization is "ecumenical" about which "package mix" (glass, aluminum, plastic) is used in packaging as long as the empty container is recycled. But, he said, his organization is against bottle bills because they do not guarantee recycling. If there is no market, the bottles can still end up in a landfill, he said.

Abramowitz said that the politics driving bottle bills is such that glass- and aluminum-container manufacturers fight such legislation requiring sale of beverages in returnable bottles using a deposit because their market share decreases while the plastic container manufacturers increase their market share. (Deposits are less on plastic containers.)

He said he agrees with those who say that recycling has intrinsic value beyond the recycled material's market value. He cited a "good feeling, knowing you are helping the environment, saving landfill space and saving energy." Recycled materials are cheaper to reform into products because they require less production energy, Abramowitz said. "For example, aluminum takes 95 percent less energy, glass takes 30 percent less energy."

But, Abramowitz added, "There still needs to be a market." He said if a homeowner separates his yard waste only to find out the waste is only going to a landfill because there is no composting program, he will not bother to separate the waste.

In fact, Abramowitz' definition of a recyclable product requires that the product have a market. "Recyclability is not workable unless the product is marketable," he said. "Without a market, it's just not practical."

cal. Markets will develop if recyclers can provide consistent, quality materials."

He recommended a solid waste program that includes curbside waste separation, drop-offs, buy-backs, composting, as well as "properly-done" incineration and landfills. Not surprisingly, Abramowitz' ideal program would not include bottle laws.

Abramowitz said a "dual system" of waste management -- curbside sorting among types of wastes and laws requiring returnable bottles with deposits -- confuses consumers. "The homeowner wonders 'What goes here? What goes there?'" he said. Recovery rates for bottles with deposits has declined in New York City from 67 percent to 60 percent, according to Abramowitz, because people find curbside recycling more convenient.

While Hugh Kaufman, EPA administrator and citizen advocate, argued a deposit system on beverage containers could reduce the solid waste stream 15-20 percent, Abramowitz said the figure is "5 percent maximum -- and that's only if you get 100 percent compliance, which you would not."

Abramowitz has also worked in government, heading the Waste Reduction Program of the Solid Waste Division within the former Texas Department of Transportation and Public Services for three years. During his tenure in Texas curbside recycling of glass, paper, cans and yard waste was initiated, he said.

The federal government must help local communities, according to Abramowitz. "The paper industry is tied to the housing industry, the steel industry to the auto industry. There is only so much in market development that locals can do," he said. Abramowitz said the federal government must "level the playing field" for virgin and recycled products.

Recycled and secondary products should receive depletion allowances, tax credits and transportation allowances as do virgin products like coal and trees, he said. "No less than five paper mills are trying to develop recyclable paper," said Abramowitz.

Also important, he said, are government procurement requirements in which certain volumes and types of supplies used within its agencies must be comprised of recycled materials. "Government needs to help. The feasibility studies should say, 'yes,'" he said.

Abramowitz argued for national standards for biodegradability as well as recyclability. "Right now you can call something biodegradable even if it takes 800 years to biodegrade," he said.

Abramowitz also said the assumption that all plastics should be biodegradable should be challenged. "Biodegradability is

part of the answer, just like recycling is part of the answer." He said that, for certain plastics like beverage containers, recycling is more practical. Other plastics more difficult to retrieve, such as garbage bags and beverage can connector loops, should be biodegradable, he said.

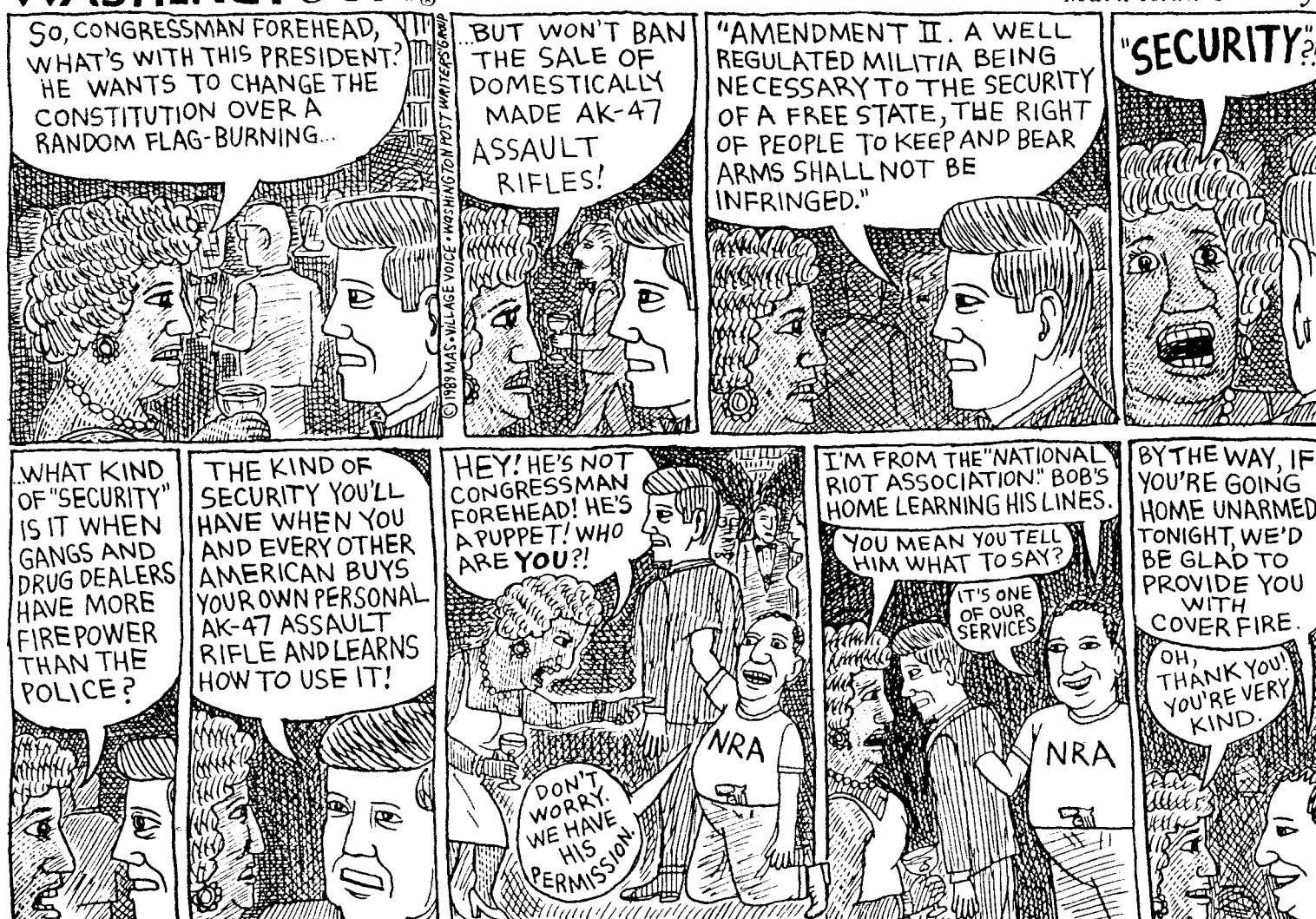
"Since the future holds tougher landfill standards (with strict RCRA Subtitle D requirements taking effect in 1991)," he said, "this will translate into higher disposal costs and changing attitudes."

Abramowitz predicted that consumer buying habits will "evolve into buying more recyclables and items with less packaging." He also sees communities providing residents with curbside recycling containers. Garbage collection would consist of a two-truck team -- one collecting garbage destined for landfills and the other collecting items to be recycled.

He also foresees increasing numbers of Congressional proposals addressing waste issues. "This 101st Congress has had 26 bills on solid waste alone," Abramowitz said. He urged those interested or involved in recycling to let their congressman know what they are doing. "We now have a situation where some of the staffers have never set foot in the state they serve," he said. "It's no wonder some of (the congressmen) don't know what's going on."

WASHINGTON

Mark Alan Stamaty



The Real Bob Forehead

Newt Gingrich, now there's a gladsome tiding. Great hair, no integrity. He's the real Bob Forehead. The reason Republicans elected this repellent little demagogue to the whipship is that they thought it would annoy Democrats. That's the Donald Segretti school of politics. With any luck, Robert K. Dornan of California will be next.

--Molly Ivins

Gauging Bush's Grand Design at the Gas Pump

Editor's note: *The still strong Reagan-Bush economic boom could soon turn into the longest in American history. At its core is a low inflation rate sustained by low and stable oil prices. OPEC has clearly closed the rifts which bedeviled it in earlier years and has committed itself to low oil prices. But this also means the Bush Administration has linked the country's economic future to a restabilization of the Middle East. Pacific News Service editor Franz Schurmann, author of "The Logic of World Power," teaches history and sociology at the University of California, Berkeley.*
by Franz Schurmann

Earlier this year motorists noticed gasoline prices climbing steeply at the pump. Some observers of the political scene wondered quietly whether the new president with his oil background might not be helping out his election backers in recession-stricken oil producing states, notably Texas.

But by mid-spring gasoline prices settled down and since then have even fallen. In a recent article New York Times correspondent Youssef M. Ibrahim offered one explanation why: OPEC stopped squabbling and agreed on a policy of keeping oil prices low.

As a result, non-OPEC oil production throughout the world has been dropping. In the U.S., Ibrahim notes, it has begun to decline "dramatically." For the first time since 1977, more than half the oil consumed

in the U.S. is imported.

For the Bush administration, nothing could be better than low gasoline prices at the pump. Motorists -- a majority of the population -- are happy. Gone for the moment are high oil prices which had been the main goad pushing up inflation. The Middle East, where the administration is trying hard to settle conflicts which endanger the peace and security of the world, is again awash in cash with which to pay off trouble-making but hard-strapped regimes.

Data released as the summer ended showed a sturdy U.S. economy. And as fears of a recession this and even next year have ebbed, some economists are seeing rosy years ahead. In the October Atlantic, Charles Morris predicts a "global economic boom" in the offing.

Low oil prices even offer possible environmental policy payoffs for Bush. With domestic oil production, including Alaska, in what could be terminal doldrums, the White House could at some point announce its decision to oppose further off-shore oil drilling, thus meeting one of the key demands of environmentalists.

The Reagan economic boom began in August 1982 with a stock market turn-around. If it lasts well into 1990, it will surpass the Kennedy-Johnson boom which spanned the years 1961 to 1968, making it the longest in U.S. history. The earlier boom was threat-

ened by the appearance of the inflation virus in 1967. That virus seems to be dormant for now.

While oil prices are not set through some conspiracy in the White House, neither do they emerge from the push and pull of supply-demand factors in the market. As Thornton Bancroft, former president of ARCO, wrote in Fortune during the mid-'70s, there never was a free market in oil.

Oil prices are set in arcane ways which involve the big oil companies, the OPEC countries and, in the wings, the big governments, especially the U.S. If harmony prevails between these three, oil prices end up being stable and generally low. Modern industrial civilization, which environmentalists are increasingly targeting as the ultimate source of environmental degradation, depends on low oil prices.

The period from 1950 to 1970 was one of exuberant expansion in the capitalist world. During that time world oil was exclusively controlled by the seven big oil companies, all U.S. and British with Dutch participation through Shell. The result was rock-like oil price stability. That stability crumbled in 1969 and, soon enough, oil prices skyrocketed and so did inflation.

Cut-throat competition between oil companies has long since vanished, and relations among the Big Seven industrial countries are excellent. Until recently,

OPEC's disunity, a reflection primarily of the Iran-Iraq war, was a key source of oil price instability. But the war is over and, for all their loathing of each other, the two adversaries are anxious to rebuild their shattered economies.

What all this means is that the Bush administration has linked the economic future of the U.S. and all other advanced industrial countries to the Middle East. It desperately wants the Iran-Iraq ceasefire to hold; that Lebanon find peace and unity, and, especially, that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict be settled. It remembers that the two biggest inflationary spurts followed by recessions in recent times came with the October 1973 Yom Kippur war and the 1979 Iranian revolution.

As to Texas, the Bush administration is recompensing it for its losses in the local frontier in the rapidly developing Mexican economy. And Mexico, as well as the Middle East, has become a key source of oil for the U.S.

There is something grandiose in this covert Bush plan for global peace and prosperity. It is not often given to citizens to have a readily available gauge with which to check the success or failure of their government's grand design. But now they have it on the pumps of their neighborhood gas stations.

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Physicians' Nagasaki Meeting

Continued from page 5

bomb fell. His back was severely burned and he had to lie prone for more than one and a half years. Day after day, his physicians were sure that he would die because his burns were not healing.

Somehow the burns healed, and he got back into the mainstream.

Tanaguchi was able to recover not only from the burns, but from the anger; he now has converted his anger toward the United States to working for world peace. He travels around the world telling his story in the hope that war can be prevented. He also said that he will not be able to die in peace until nuclear weapons are abolished from the earth.

Another remarkable person was Joseph Rotblat, a London physicist. Dr. Rotblat originally traveled to the United States to work on the Manhattan Project. He felt that if the United States developed the bomb, Hitler would refrain from using the bomb he was developing. Rotblat said he believes he was one of the first people to articulate the idea of Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD).

He realized later that theory does not work in the hands of a psychopath. When Germany stopped production of their bomb,

Rotblat was the only scientist to resign from the Manhattan Project, realizing that there was no more justification for the bomb to be developed.

He has since been working for the abolition of all nuclear weapons. Many of the conference participants were from the USSR. Mikhail Kuzin, IPPNW's co-president, serves as the Director of the Surgical Clinic of the First Moscow Medical School. He has been an articulate spokesperson for disarmament and redirection of resources to health care, sanitation, and environmental issues. Other Soviets gave presentations at workshops and colloquia on subjects such as nuclear reactor accidents, the environment, and monitoring of the nuclear test ban.

The Soviet government had honored for more than a year a self-imposed moratorium on nuclear testing, which the United States repeatedly refused to join, and they subsequently broke. There was sorrow among conference participants from all countries that on the day before the conference the USSR had tested another nuclear weapon.

There were 3,000 physicians from 76 countries attending the conference. How hopeful I felt to see members of my profession sharing a commitment to ultimate human welfare everywhere.

Faustian Drama Accompanied Atomic Bomb's Development

From page 5

ervations to General Groves is a matter of dramatic license. But director Roland Jaffe says all works of art are imaginative and "Fat Man and Little Boy" is no exception. But Japanese victims of the bomb are never shown; instead, Jaffe has chosen to represent them symbolically through the death of a single young innocent white scientist, a fictional character named Michael Merri-man.

Producer Tony Garnett: Michael Merri-man is the metaphor not only for all those people who died in Japan, but for all of us who might be microwaved too...Because to tack on to a film which was always about the making of the bomb some shots or some footage about Nagasaki and Hiroshima would have opened us up to the criticism, justly, I think, that we were being opportunistic."

At least 200,000 Japanese died as the result of the bombings of August 1945. The bomb named Fat Man, for Winston Churchill, was dropped on Nagasaki. Little Boy, dropped on Hiroshima, was originally named Thin Man for Franklin Roosevelt.

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National Public Radio

HELP WANTED:

Nebraskans for Peace is seeking a full-time employee to work in Nebraska's Third Congressional District. The job will consist of organizing for peace and justice issues, and building and maintaining NFP chapters in the district, and will begin January, 1990. The job requires creativity and enjoyment of people. The board, said to be spirited and enjoyable folks, promise to be good people to work for. Work will be based in North Platte or Kearney. Contact Jeff Tracy, P.O. Box 125, Scottsbluff, Neb., 69363 by November 18.

Reader Questions Wisdom of Legalizing Drugs

by Dennis F. Timmermann

Mr. Timmermann is assistant state director of the United Transportation Union.

Perhaps our nation's statespersons have not flunked history as David M. Elderkin, former president of the Iowa State Bar Association, suggests in his article calling for the legalization of drugs. Mr. Elderkin maintains the solution to the drug problem lies within the legalization of crack, cocaine, heroin and marijuana (thus removing profit), plus education and rehabilitation. History has been dotted with failed national legalized drug programs.

A legalized drug policy contains two strong points that cannot be given enough emphasis or respect: the cost of drug-law enforcement and the elimination of competitive distribution systems. Drug-law enforcement costs would be transferred to drug education programs and drug rehabilitation centers. The violence that attaches itself to competitive distribution would be erased; streets and neighborhoods would be turned back to their residents.

Mr. Elderkin proposes the government dispense drugs. At the same time the gov-

ernment would keep track of drug users and proffer rehabilitation.

Great Britain employed a national drug program wherein hospital patients addicted to pain-killers could receive physician prescriptions for opiates. Youths discovered heroin and the number of addicts increased 40-fold. The prescription system failed. A controlled distribution program followed, utilizing government clinics. Finally, a policy was adopted allowing methadone, an attractive chemical alternative, to be substituted for heroin and heroin was banned. Great Britain's drug policy failed. Increased drug addiction and drug-related crimes in Spain and Amsterdam have both countries contemplating ending legalized drug policies.

Should the worthiness of a drug policy be measured strictly in economic terms? Does moral merit warrant consideration?

It is a widely embraced belief that society, with government as its agent, has a responsibility to instill certain qualities in its ranks. Case in point: mandatory schooling. Society wants virtuous citizens who perform useful behavior.

Crack, the current drug choice for many, is a stimulant that produces pleasure and oblivion. Crack is extremely addictive. Crack addicts are prone to violent acts. Crack users, unlike alcohol and tobacco users, use crack solely for its intoxicating properties. To date, there is no attractive chemical alternative for crack users. Crack leaves its addicts threadbare of virtues. Seventy-five percent of regular illicit drug users become addicted. Ten percent of alcohol users become addicted.

The price of any legalized drug needs to be subsidized to discourage black-market retail. Ample outlets need to be erected to satisfy the convenience-minded. Because they would no longer be required to enter threatening environments, more upper- and middle-class citizens would become addicted. Additional rehabilitation centers would be required. More drug-addicted babies need long-term care. The quality and quantity of the nation's work would be reduced.

Clearly the nation's tolerance for illicit, and in some instances licit, drug use is declining. Seventy-three percent of Americans oppose the legalization of marijuana, 90 percent favor the toughening of illicit

drug laws. Proposed DWI legislation in California asks the maximum blood alcohol content level be reduced by 20 percent. Tobacco processors are required to post warning labels on their products. Railroads have the ability to fire employees, on call 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, for having less than 1 percent of blood alcohol content while on duty. Even though some drug policies make perfect sense, other drug policies are left wanting. America's unmistakable message is "No" to drug use.

The jury is still out on how to reduce the demand for drugs. The answer probably lies in more education, an increase in the quality and quantity of jobs, less adventurism, less poverty and racism and less distance between the haves and the have-nots. Perhaps only the extended exposure to the ugliness of drug use can stop it.

Mr. Elderkin maintains drug use has dropped 37 percent in the last three years. A respectable percentage. Neither an Alberta Clipper nor a legalized drug policy will blow America's drug problem out to sea. The strongest argument is to keep illegal drugs illegal.

LETTERS

Educate to Prevent Abortions

Thank you for the article on abortion. I appreciate your thoughts on a compromise position. I, too, am perplexed that a solution does not seem to be forthcoming. I have watched this issue develop for 20 years, and not seen any feasible solution.

If I declare that I am a "pro-lifer" than I am labeled a "right-wing-anti-woman-religious-fanatic." If I declare that I am "pro-choice" than I am labeled "baby-killer." Needless to say, I consider myself neither.

At present, we hear two voices, each calling for disparate solutions. Bear with me (no pun intended) while I bring each to its conclusion.

Let us say that we ban abortion on a state-by-state basis. Let us say that Nebraska rules abortion illegal, except in the case of rape, incest, and to save the life of the mother.

If a woman were to seek an abortion under these conditions, what exactly would the process be? If she were raped, would she need corroboration? Exactly what proof would she need to obtain an abortion? Exactly what proof would she need to obtain an abortion. To whom would she report? Her doctor? The police? If it is between her and her doctor, than a woman need only say she had been raped to obtain a legal abortion. If the police are involved, what proof will they need? Do we take the word of the woman? Probably not.

What about incest? Will she have to name the person -- her father, brother, uncle, grandfather. Most victims of incest are minor

children living in an obviously abusive home. Will she have to bring charges? How are we to protect her?

What about saving the life of the mother? Who will determine that she needs an abortion to save her life? Will it be her doctor? A panel of doctors? A judge? Who will make this determination?

O.K. So we figure this all out, we have all the beaurocratic mechanisms in place so the law is satisfied that no woman is getting an abortion who is not legally entitled to one.

But...abortion is still legal in New York, because remember, this law is done on a state-by-state basis. What will it take? An appointment with a doctor in New York, an airline ticket, reservations at a hotel? Basically it takes money. So the law in Nebraska only affects poor women. Rich women will still be able to obtain a clean, safe and legal abortion. So what does a desperate, poor woman do? She can lie and say she's been raped. She can obtain an illegal abortion (because let's face it, they will be available); and risk serious infection, death or if caught, criminal charges. Which brings up the problem of what those charges would be. Would she be charged with murder? Finally she can try a do-it-herself-method. So what is the solution here? To make it illegal nationally? Then we have the same scenario. Just change New York to Sweden, but it will have more money. We cannot seem to legislate that a woman have a baby if she does not want to.

The pro-choice solution is to keep things

as they are. But what about all these abortions? Are we to be satisfied that women are having two and three abortions as a substitute for birth control? If nothing else, this is a serious health risk. And why are women having so many abortions? Don't they know how to prevent pregnancy? In this day and age we should be ashamed at how ignorant we are! Why are we not being more responsible?

Your article suggested the solution. Education. Abortion gives a woman control over her body, but education gives women and men control over their lives. Let's take about sex with our children. Let's teach our children to be sexually responsible.

If the consensus is that sex education belongs in the home, then we need to teach parents how to teach their children.

Pro-choice and pro-life advocates ought to have the same goal. The goal being that abortion be only necessary in the case of rape, incest and to save the life of the mother; that men and women who do not want to procreate take responsible measures to insure they do not. However, on the way to that goal we should not try to actuate hard, rigid rules that we are unable or incapable of enforcing. Instead of achieving this goal through legislation, let's achieve it through education. If we had started educating our youth 20 years ago, maybe we wouldn't now be facing the same old situation. Let's not be fighting the same old fight 20 years from now.

Trish Lanphier

Abortion Article Appreciated

Dear Editor,

I just finished reading your article in the Sept. 27, 1989 edition of The Nebraska Observer. I liked it. I liked it very much. I only hope my pro-life friends will read it and understand the sincerity of your thoughts. Society is going to have to arrive at a compromise on this issue or live in isolation or worse.

I will continue to work towards reversing Roe v. Wade because I consider it nonsense. I will also continue to advocate protection of human life at its earliest stages. While doing so, I hope I will have the courage and common sense to listen to voices like yours and to work towards a civilized solution to this most difficult problem.

Please continue your good thinking and writing and sharing.

Very truly,
Jerold V. Fennell

*This is not the kind
of break we
wanted or needed.
But it did stop the
Oakland As.*

*San Francisco Partisan Herb Caen
on that city's recent earthquake*

Wadman's Send-off: \$25,000

by Ernest J. Kubr

When the Nebraska Supreme Court overturned the reinstatement of Omaha Police Chief Robert Wadman, they did not stipulate that only half of the decision was overturned. Yet our local city government has only enacted half of the court's decision.

Wadman has been allowed to resign to save his work record, but has not been required to return the compensation he received from the city upon reinstatement to the chief's job. The city of Omaha paid him \$20,560.64 in back pay and put an additional \$5,000 into his pension fund.

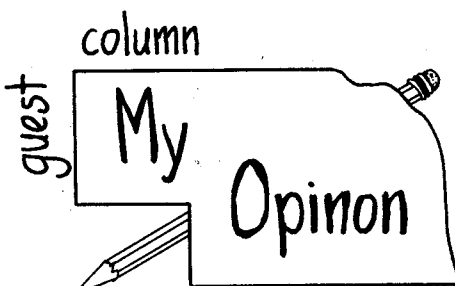
I think that since his firing was upheld, he should be required to return any compensation he received for the period of time he was not on the job as police chief.

According to Diane Zipay, an aide for the mayor, this money was not back pay, it fees Wadman incurred during his appeal. But a World-Herald article dated June 11, 1987, stated that Judge Davis ordered the payment of \$20,560.64 in back pay plus benefits. Wadman's request for legal fees was dropped when the city dropped its request to reduce the back pay by the amount he earned at a job in Washington, D.C.

I asked Mrs. Zipay what the mayor intended to do and was informed that the mayor has no intention of asking for the money back. She said, and I am paraphrasing, "He has two kids in college, one in high school, he's taking a cut in pay, his family will be split up, he'll have to pay room and

board in Aurora, and also support his family in Omaha until his last kid finishes high school. He is by no means a rich man, and on top of all that you want us to say: 'By the way, on your way out the door leave us a check for \$20,000.' Where is your humanity?"

I am human. I also know that if this happened to the average Joe in the Public Works Department he would have his wages



garnished to get the money back.

According to Kent Winnerv in the city Law Department, this divisive issue of Robert Wadman should be put to rest. The City Attorney is to the mayor what the U.S. Attorney General is to the president. They only pursue what the chief executive wants them to. If the mayor really wanted to put this issue to rest, he would not have appointed Robert Wadman as Acting Chief and would have asked him to return the city funds, which he has no legal claim to.

I feel that Robert Wadman's high position and the fact that he helped the mayor in the campaign are the only reasons he is not being required to return the money. It's the buddy system at work in our city.

I contacted the Omaha Police Union and was informed that they have voted on this. The decision was not to press the issue.

I have tried to contact my city council representative a couple of times about this issue and he has not returned my call as of this writing.

Several people I've contacted said it would not be worth the legal fees and court costs to pursue return of the money. But nobody has asked him face-to-face to return it. It should not take legal action to get the money provided Wadman is as ethical as everybody makes him out to be. If he has no legal claim to it, why wouldn't he return it?

Does he have so much power and influence that he is considered unapproachable on issues which are unfavorable to him? Or does he have something on the people in our government as he allegedly stated about the committee investigating the Franklin collapse? Why doesn't someone just ask Wadman for the money?

In this time of tightening budgets and lack of funds, I think a \$25,000 bonus, if given, should come from the mayor's own-pocket -- NOT the taxpayers'.

Editor's note: Since this was written, Mayor Morgan called the writer, but did not offer any support for the idea of collecting the \$25,000 from Wadman.

Francke on Elitist Critics and Other Media Commntnts

Continued from page 3

of those who once scorned him. Meanwhile, the elitists who defended "Erma" now denounce the mundane "Cranes" in the name of a support-your-local-artist campaign.

As for me, I have about as much business in this tempestuous teapot as the average Herald editorial writer.

Keep Your Eye On:

-- Media struggles to summarize the 1980s. For a perfect antidote to the more poisonous decade-lumping, read the Oct. 16 New Yorker. Its "Talk of the Town" column begins:

"The essay we meant to write on the End of the Eighties was written much better by a writer at another magazine, we found by a writer at another magazine, we found out last week, and that left us with a free day to go out and get lost."

-- Media attempts to label the 1990s. Remember what happened to the 1890s. The November Spy asks why Reagan is still smiling after he gets a hole drilled in his head, then suggests a '90s theme of "competitive self-deprecation, one-downmanship."

I say wait for something better.

Concerns Over BioWaste Incinerator

Continued from page 1

4. The local governing body must approve the application before a permit can be granted.

Bodnar said Judge Murphy's refusal to allow amending plaintiffs' petition to ask for a writ of mandamus requiring DEC to go through the hazardous waste procedures appears to be a procedural error. "It is crystal clear in my mind that we were entitled to file the amended petition," said Bodnar.

"Apparently he was persuaded by (Assistant Attorney General) Linda Willard's argument that we must first go through the internal appellate procedure within the Department of Environmental Control once the permit is issued. The State didn't like the writ of mandamus facing them because... (that's) much more difficult to stop than an injunction," Bodnar said.

"What we're seeking to do is get the DEC to perform the duties that begin at the start of the permit process," said Bodnar. "I think it's...high-handed the way the State is handling this. They're trying to push this onto the citizens. It's different for them to

burn a limited amount of medical waste at scattered sites...(from) the hospitals," he said. "But once they put in a commercial medical waste incinerator, especially one in an international trade zone, the more they can burn, the more profit they'll make. It's not going to be a positive thing for Omaha at all."

Lanphier said she didn't understand what motivated Grams and the DEC to "shirk their responsibilities and decide to play with our lives and our health. Even though this incinerator has the potential to emit toxic pollutants, they don't even plan to do a health risk assessment."

She said that following the hazardous waste procedures would not be "jeopardizing BioWaste's business. It just means that if BioWaste wanted to build the incinerator, it would have to follow the more stringent qualifications and siting routine. Our focus is not, and never has been, specifically on Biowaste. The number one job of our state government is to protect the health and welfare of the citizens of this state. Economic development is second to that."

That colored stamp:

Complimentary copy

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Homeless March in Washington to Demand Justice

by Colman McCarthy

WASHINGTON -- For a moment this October, America had a different view the homeless -- not as recipients of charity, of which there is a fair amount, but as demanders of justice, of which there is little.

Bums who beg have a place in our national life, from cartoons in the New Yorker magazine that depict the humorous ingenuity of down-and-outs putting the touch on sidewalk passerby, to the benign neighborhood wino who says he needs a quarter for a bowl of soup but who knows -- wink -- that we know it will go for a pint of rotgut.

The 100,000 and more who march in Washington were neither beggars nor drunks. If they were, the name of the organizing group that brought them here would have been Shelter Now, not Housing Now. Shelters, called poorhouses in the 19th century, are for those who can't make it without society's charity. Houses are for those -- elderly people, single parents, children, the recovering mentally ill, the unemployed and the poverty-wage underemployed -- who have either made it in the past or can make it in the future, provided they are included in the same

social, economic and political structure that cushions people who do have houses.

Citizens who were once called "the deserving poor" now have a rightful claim to be called "the deserving unhoused." Who, and where, are they? The time to meet some of them was not the afternoon of the march but two days before when, by foot or by Greyhound, they slipped into Washington.

Barely. The main open-air encampment for the homeless was in the capital's Siberia -- a soggy upslope on marshland that borders the fetid Anacostia River in the far northeast of Washington. On the opposite side of the fenced-in area was a cemetery, which was across from the D.C. morgue and an AIDS testing clinic, while behind that was the D.C. jail. This was about the only site in town on which 300 squatters could settle and not be blamed for lowering property values.

For two days before the Saturday march, poor people from such groups as the Detroit Union of the Homeless, the Tucson Union of the Homeless and the Philadelphia Union of the Homeless organized the country's first national convention of the homeless. A yellow-and-white striped tent, about half the size of the football field at RFK stadium that loomed in the horizon a mile away, and as

high as a weak punt, had been set up. After a few hours, it had the shelter look -- mats, blankets and cots laid out next to boxes of gleaned bread, rolls and fruit. A generator, chugging like a rowboat's motor, kept a few lightbulbs burning dimly.

On the early evening of the first day, Savina Martin of Boston and the director of WINGS -- Women's Institute for New Growth and Support -- ran one of the four workshops that had the unstated goal of ending the fiction that homeless people are helpless people. She had 20 citizens in her audience, none of whom had a taste for anything except the straightest of talk. Martin, agile of tongue, supplied it.

At the end of the convention, the group produced a statement and a list of demands. They were like delayed mines, exploding long after being set in the shelters and flophouses of Tucson or Boston. The demands were no different from those brokered routinely by healthy and employed people: "the opportunity to be productive" and "to work for a livable wage."

A decade ago, when homeless people began turning up in the cleaner parts of town, a national drive was commenced to open shelters. Congressional committees

toured them and, with the expected ruction, occasionally held hearings in them. One congressman hopped into a food dumpster to display his worry about poor people who ate out of them.

At the same time that federal money came forth for shelters, other funds were denied or sapped. Plant closings, layoffs, minimum-wage or sub-minimum-wage jobs, plus the elimination of money for low-income housing were unstoppable economic forces that drove people from their apartments and homes. What wasn't true in the 1970s is now true of the 1980s: Families make up 75 percent of the homeless.

They were on view at the marshland by the Anacostia River. Large numbers of children passed the time by playing pickup games of baseball. They were joined by a couple of good-natured policemen, neither of whom had any taste for the job of keeping the lid on.

Small chance that it would blow. Citizens at the first national homeless convention were too intelligent -- all Ph.D.s in street smarts -- to waste time in mindless rage. They were here to show justified anger.

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Marcher Wonders Why Celebrities Were So Pushy

by Paul Bello

The author, who is from Omaha, participated in the recent Housing Now march in Washington D.C. Following are some reflections.

United, elated, excited we marched from the Pentagon to the Capitol. I understand that before the last half of the crowd had left the Pentagon, the front had reached the Capitol. Inspired, we stood together with thousands, who drove and rode from as far as Arizona to rally for affordable housing. Apparently, they were in as much agreement as we that each person is important -- that if one person suffers, we all suffer. And so here we stood, amassed on the grounds before the nation's Capitol. One body, one voice, one people.

Confusion ran all over my mind when suddenly four or five people scattered out and pushed through the crowd, frantic for space, strain for faces, panic in motion. Pleading, they asked people to make space. "For what?" I thought, "There must have been an accident or something." I started moving back. I heard someone say, "Hey, take it easy. Were moving.", as one of the "strain for faces" pushed him against others at his back. "I don't care what you do. Just move!" was what he heard. That's what I heard, too.

I focused in the direction of the commotion; the cause came into view. Impor-

tant people needed our space. I saw the important people for whom we were shoved aside: actors, celebrities. Were they making the point, "We are with you!"? Why in a gathering to support affordable housing for the homeless -- the "least of our brothers and sisters", did the commoner get shoved aside?

My spirit sank. It made no sense. Our little trio stood stunned as a fence of people locked in armhold emerged and defined the holy space -- about thirty by fifty feet -- in which we were not allowed. And within it was a line of about twenty-five celebrities across, about twelve on each side of Jesse J. In the midst of the tens of thousands gathered they seemed to be engaging in their own march up to the stage. Goodness knows, they couldn't be attempting to show us their support because I'm certain that this body, this ad-hoc community of tens of thousands, was certainly self-supportive. Nonetheless, onward they pushed.

Soon thereafter, three of the thousands left disheartened: two who drove to Washington from Nebraska participate, one from D.C. The march was over for us, and apparently, so was the rally. We grabbed a hot pretzel from a vendor, drifted listlessly to the far end of the park and sat down, our backs to the platform and booming speakers. My feelings hurt, and my mind already turned off by the symbolic presence of the

"one Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church" at the start of the rally, it trailed further as Susan Day's holler echoed, "I think I love you!! You're beautiful!!" Though I felt shoved aside, as did my two friends, I was well aware that I am lovable. I didn't come to Washington to hear an actress from L.A. Law tell me so. A woman from Arizona (?) spoke somewhere in between some celebrity. It woke me up again. I heard the spirit of the rally cry out in her voice. It throttled me to the core of my being. She was the person who spoke in the spirit of the movement. I felt recharged. Her voice boomed the reason why we came together as one people. I felt united once more, for one moment. She did well, in spite of someone behind her within ear-shot of the mike who was apparently trying to coach her into yelling, "what do you want!?", (to which we should respond, "Housing."); and "When do you want it!?" (to which we should respond, "Now.") She didn't do it. Frankly, it wasn't necessary. She was dynamic without that someone's help.

We went to Washington because Mitch Snyder asked us to go, when he spoke at the Day House in Omaha. He said that the Housing Now campaign needed numbers -- bodies. We respected his dedication to his work, so we went. The celebrities that went were also important. The reason is self-evident. It is my humble belief, however,

that we all went as many becoming one, and all of equal status -- which in my opinion, is the most powerful medium for creating an even more powerful spirit which gives life to a movement. It saddened me when I saw that they misunderstood their role, created a barrier, and disrupted the unity of spirit by marching into and through a standing mass. Couldn't they have marched at the head? Or if they were afraid of being mobbed by commoners, shouldn't they have recognized that their status naturally provides them with a unique role? Apparently they recognized their difference, hence their barrier. If it was unavoidable that they be separate, they should either start already on the platform, or do some behind-the-scene work. True, we were only three who felt the shove. But weren't we of some significance?

ECOLOGY NOW

A new environmental group has sprung up on the UNO and UNL campuses. Ecology Now hopes to raise concerns about environmental catastrophes about to occur on our planet.

A recent Ranch Bowl Benefit for the Rain Forest Action Network was very successful as was a picket at a banquet in the Governor's honor.

All UNO students are encouraged to attend Ecology Now's weekly meetings at the Milo Bail Student Center every Sunday at 4:00. There is a volleyball game after each meeting; wear your tennis shoes. Let's save our planet! Now!

But You Can Make Ripples

In Hard Times, You Can't Always Make Waves

by Lynn Moorer

Former State Energy Director Kandra Hahn says public policy victories can be hard to recognize, especially in the area of resources.

Speaking Oct. 7 at a session of the annual conference of the Nebraska State Recycling Association and the state chapter of the Governmental Refuse Collection and Disposal Association held in Lincoln, Hahn said policies which continue after a public official leaves office comprise the real victories achieved through public service.

Drawing upon her experiences as former Gov. Bob Kerrey's Energy Director, as an elected Lancaster County official, and her work in marketing, Hahn concluded, "As long as you're there, you can...displace a little bit...that might not be right. But the minute you're gone...things fill in. But...sometimes the ripples go on."

Now a consultant with Economic Research Associates in Lincoln, Hahn said resources, together with labor and capital, are the three components of productivity. She said that while policies in all three areas vary in their levels of success, policymakers in the United States lack understanding of how to design good public policy in resources.

Following are excerpts of Hahn's conference speech.

Energy Sources

There is an increasing inefficiency in the marginal cost of primary extraction. That means that every time we go in to get some new resources it costs more to get it out and more of it turns into waste. We have to go 5,000 feet deeper to get our oil. We get lower-grade ores pulled out, which creates more waste and more cost to get the good ores.

We don't have the wonderful resources we once had. That's good news for (recyclers)...because that means that the economics of secondary resources -- recycling -- are better and better.

(Recyclers) have the potential to do more for productivity than all those tax policies that really have not moved us in the direction we need to be moving nationally.

Recycling as a Monopoly

Imagine if recycling were perceived to be (like natural gas) a natural monopoly. There's nothing natural about natural gas monopolies...or electric monopolies. We decided they were. It's a matter of public policy.

If (recyclers) banded together and became a natural monopoly, you (could) get cities to franchise you as the sole monopoly operator... Then they would have to give you guaranteed return on your equity. It won't be too tough to get bank financing. It cer-

tainly won't be hard to see stock. It really might be a good strategy.

Moving Highly Radioactive Waste

When I was a brand-new Director of Energy I...received communication about the potential routes for the interstate transportation of high-level radioactive waste.

It was the first time anyone in Nebraska ever talked about the issue...So, I talked to the colonel of the State Patrol, who told me, "Don't worry. It's no problem. Nothing can go wrong. Engineers have told us nothing will go wrong with waste...They put it in these casks...And we get a phone call (when it comes through the state) and everything's fine."

The Department of Energy... is really the nuclear branch of the Pentagon. There's a very, very thin veneer of conservation programs and talking nice to people and treating state officials really good and making sure they can go to nice conferences so they won't get uppity.

I didn't feel very good. I was starting to get a little -- the worst word we can say in public policy -- I was starting to get a little emotional... The one thing you never want to do.

(Then) I decided I should learn...from the experts -- the Federal Emergency Management Agency. FEMA really knows how to treat people well. They pay your way (for a)...nice hotel in Kansas City. You sit around and they teach you to say, "Don't worry. Nothing can go wrong." They also make fun of emotional people. They say, "You have to watch out for the public. you can't tell them anything because they get emotional."

That seemed to me to be a process I'd known in business school as cognitive dissonance. It seemed to me to be repeating to ourselves phrases that made us feel pretty good about something we didn't know much about....

They sent engineers to educate (me). I said, "How do you know nothing can go wrong?" They said, "The engineers have run the numbers." "What are the numbers?" "Risk analysis."

(They told me) risk analysis is quantification of likelihood times quantification of risk.... We quantify likelihood (based)...on experience. What's the likelihood of an earthquake? What's the likelihood of a truck rolling off the interstate?

(They told me), "We do have a problem quantifying human error. That's kind of a random factor so we really can't quantify it. So, we don't put that into the risk analysis because it's unreliable data."

I thought that was interesting because...everything I'd read (told me)...human error is the primary cause of nuclear accidents. But that's OK. The engineers (had) the numbers taken care of. We don't need to worry about that.

The other thing that bothered me...about risk analysis was (the) phrase: acceptable level of mortality. It sounded to me a lot like death or killing people.... When you run the numbers you have to run them again so there's an acceptable level of mortality.

The engineers have to decide how many people it's OK to kill with nuclear waste.... That is God's truth. There are those numbers in the calculation.

Now, they're not real numbers. you're not actually going to kill real people. But you are probably going to diminish the quality of life of 10 people 10 percent over 10 years...something like that. That adds up to one-tenth of one person per year.

Maybe you will actually kill some people. But that's a social price and that's how you quantify an impact the best you can.

Department of Energy

The Department of Energy...is really the nuclear branch of the Pentagon. There's a very, very thin veneer of conservation programs and talking nice to people and treating state officials really good and making sure they can go to nice conferences so they won't get uppity.

So they threw a few nickels and dimes on the table so the state energy directors could get together and we could talk about these troublesome issues of impact and likelihood.

(At) these meetings...we talked about a planning timeframe of 10,000 years. The only reason we talked about that timeframe of years was because the human mind can't really cope with the true planning timeframe, which is 100,000 years. So we cut it by 10 so we could deal with it.... That can give you a sense of the absurdity of what public office will call upon you to do.

The only thing we ever figured out to do (to) control our emotions to some extent was to say, "Please, if you're going to bring high-level nuclear waste into the state of Nebraska, would you please do it the way Congress said...make the phone calls?"

We didn't attack the way Congress put the bill together. We didn't attack the industry. We just said, "Please, Department of Energy, when you bring it through, call the State Patrol. Maybe they'll tell the Governor.... Maybe we'll tell local officials who can handle the emotional impact that nu-

clear waste is coming through their town with its acceptable level of mortality."

They said, "How can you imagine we would not do what the law requires? How can you be so terrible to us and accuse us?"

Later (after I resigned as Energy Director)...it began to show up in the newspaper that the waste from Three Mile Island was...on a train...coming across the United States. Of course, the network of state officials knew it was coming because they called each other. But nobody from the DOE called. Nobody called the governors.

Finally, the train was in Kansas (along with) the TV cameras. The chief of staff of the State of Nebraska had to...fly down...and stand near the railroad track (to) prevent the train from coming into...Nebraska until DOE made the phone call. That was the minimum.

We didn't ask them not to kill us. We (only) said, "Please, make the phone call." But they didn't.

It felt like a little victory (when the chief of staff flew down to Kansas). That was a little ripple in a glass of water. Something still going on that I had started.

Low-level Radioactive Waste

It's just a political definition.... It's very clear that it is at least 80 percent nuclear generation waste. Now, it has turned into debates about A, B and C waste with very nice ways of packaging this stuff up. But it's the same stuff.

There have been lies. And the lying will go on. It will be important that people who are not nuclear physicists and not rocket scientists simply stand up and be emotional and say, "I do care about the quality of my life. I don't have to do stupid quantifications of risk and likelihood to know how I want to live my life." And that's what's going to be important. And that's what is going to make the difference.

C.L.E.A.N.

and

People Against Polluters

are cosponsoring an informational meeting at the Power Landing, 7230 Florence Blvd.

Strategies for halting the Biowaste Incinerator project will be discussed and everyone's input is appreciated. Films, music, and information will be featured. If you've been waiting to act, this is the time.

7:00 p.m. Saturday, November 25
Let's dump this turkey!

Call Tom Foster 455-5836 for more information or to offer help.

MAD DADS Don't Address Systemic Issues

The author, a former member of the police watchdog committee, is the co-host of People of Color (formerly Minority Forum) on Cox Cable.

by A'Jamal-Rashad Byndon

We have been bombarded in the media with a group of African-Americans who call themselves MAD DADS. I think their name is an acronym which stands for "Men against destruction, disorder and drunk (drug-addict) siblings." The reasons they have gathered an inordinate amount of media coverage is because they:

1. Offered foot patrol to this year's Septemberfest. Last year, during the event, a group of hoodlums attacked a number of folks and created chaos.

2. Painted over graffiti at various locations in the community.

3. Proposed using a helicopter to scan potential street drug deals and/or suspicious activities.

4. Held a press conference to show off their \$8,000.00 computer -- an automatic telephone dialing machine. This machine would allow households to receive and give information related to drug and gang activity to MAD DADS.

5. Got Sam Walker, a professor of Criminal Justice at UNO, to recant his statement that the helicopter idea was "silly."

As a life-long resident of the African-

American community, it is apparent the efforts of MAD DADS are misguided. It is apparent that its major purpose is to act as a conduit for the Omaha Police Department. Many in the African-American community have a problem with this, because of the Dirty Harry-type personalities on the force who have not been put in check.

To date, the city of Omaha does not have a civilian review committee and has not explained the circumstances of the deaths of Richard Kellin and Kevin Watson. Such important issues have been pushed to the back burner because the Negro clergy have lost the fortitude to address such issues.

The city of Omaha spends millions of dollars on its police force. Officers are trained in maintaining "law and order" (it's questionable whose laws and in what order), yet because many officers are busy sleeping under trees, making excessive phone calls and generally not practicing good police work, the African-American community is supposed to subsidize lazy behavior. I get tired of seeing them mooching from restaurants instead of paying their fair share.

Clearly, not all African Americans agree with MAD DADS (one wonders if they are mad emotionally or psychologically) or their pea-brain ideas. It is apparent that MAD DADS' modus operandi is to acquire as much publicity as possible in a brief period.

One example was the incident when Sam Walker called the helicopter idea "silly." An emissary of MAD DADS met with Sam Walker and the dean of one of the colleges at the university. Walker emerged from this one-and-one-half-hour meeting singing laudatory comments regarding the helicopter. It does not take a genius to guess what occurred. A group spending that amount of time on one white professor's opinion demonstrates its lack of seriousness. In spite of the few African-American staff and faculty on campus, the group is more concerned with reversing a word used to describe its helicopters. What was even more absurd was for the Omaha World-Herald to devote so much space to that stupid idea. (I wonder how the World-Herald knew about this meeting?)

Finally, the purchase of a \$8,000 computer phone-dialing machine. This piece of equipment is supposed to target certain areas with phone calls to give and receive information. This is clearly an invasion of privacy. One doesn't enjoy paying extra for an unlisted number only to have a computer or bimboish person disturbing one's tranquility. Why did a fledgling organization with a small amount funds or capital purchase such an expensive piece of equipment? Even the Omaha Police Department with its excessive budget doesn't have such a gadget.

There are a couple of questions raised by this venture. One of its members runs a public relations operation. This equipment could be put to good use for him. Another member has already announced his intention of running for public office. Clearly, both could conceivably be seen as having a conflict of interest, if their primary goal is the advancement of MAD DADS.

The reader may think the writer has a bone to pick with Mad Dads. No -- as a life-long resident of the African-American community, I have had enough of the Larry King Jr. types, and his compadres pimping the community. The African-American community does not need gimmicks and gadgets to circumvent the real issues -- quality education, employment, housing and justice.

In conclusion, to paraphrase John Foster, the ringleader of MAD DADS, during a meeting in jail with a bunch of alleged drug dealers and gang members: "We know we were not there when you needed us. However, now we are giving to be around to help you." The absurdity of such a statement will be repeated again and again. Until MAD DADS address the issues in the system which create drug and gang problems in the African-American community, then one wonders if the group's name is a reflection of the members' psychological status.

North Omaha Needs an All-Black Police Unit

The following letter to Public Safety Director Pitmon Foxall was written to illustrate the need for a black officers unit. The World-Herald all but ignored it. Only a few parts of it were printed, tacked on to an article about Douglas County Attorney Ron Staskeiwicz. The article itself was relegated to the want ads page, and its inconspicuous headline had nothing to do with black police relations.

Omaha's favorite local daily was too overwhelmed with real news that day to do this story justice (they devoted a whole section front on cats), so we want to make sure our readers know about it.

Although the World-Herald never printed Chambers' letter, it did publish a rebuttal, "Police Union Criticizes Chambers for Comments," on the Midlands section front.

The author, a state Senator, believes that the matter would not have been handled in such a manner had the public official been Mayor Morgan, Council Member Joe Friend, or any white person. Contacted by the Observer, Chambers reported that Mayor Morgan had called him about the matters in the letter below, and had expressed concern and an intention to correct the situation.

by Ernie Chambers

east corner of the intersection of Florence Boulevard and Locust Street. She was in the grassy parking area between the sidewalk and the street.

I stopped to render aid. She appeared to be unconscious, so I shook her gently to rouse her. Initially disoriented and unable to speak coherently, she eventually told me she had fallen and that her head hurt badly. She was unable to tell me her name or anyone to contact. When I told her I'd go to the nearest phone and call for help, she panicked, clutched at my arm, began crying uncontrollably and pleaded with me not to leave her alone.

Continuing to kneel beside her, I assured her I would not leave.

A young man who stopped to inquire what had happened said he'd drive to the nearby Fire Station and summon assistance. Very soon, a fire rig arrived and shortly thereafter, a rescue squad. The emergency personnel immediately began ministering to her and asked if anyone in the small crowd that had gathered knew the lady. (Eventually, a person provided a name.) The emergency personnel placed a wide collar about her neck and had begun preparations to place her in the rescue unit when a cruiser approached from the north on

Florence Boulevard. Crossing the center line (for some unknown reason), the driver blocked Locust Street (facing south on Florence Boulevard) even though there was no vehicular traffic to speak of. Leaving the door open and lights on, he emerged from the cruiser and immediately accosted the gathered people, shouting: "Get back! Get away! Get across the street!" He had unhitched his club and was jabbing it toward people while he swung his flashlight from side to side. Standing in front of me, he said, "That goes for you, too!"

I said, "You have a gun, a club and a badge, but I'm not going anywhere." Despite his belligerence, hostility, insulting and threatening manner, I refused to move and told him: "You think you can treat people any way you please, because you have that club and a gun. But you're wrong. You don't know what has happened, and you don't know who these people are. They could be relatives; they could be witnesses." At that point, someone said, "That's Senator Chambers." Officer Rokes responded, "I know who he is."

Officer Rokes began to walk away from me. Because his belligerence had nearly provoked a disorder where none existed before his arrival, I asked for his name. He

refused to tell me. I insisted. He pointed to his metal name tag. I told him it was dark, and I could not read it. He shined his flashlight on it, at an angle, creating a glare, so that I still could not read his name.

By this time, the other officer had arrived, and I asked him for his partner's name, which he readily gave. Having been near enough to overhear my remarks about possible witnesses among the group, he asked whether I had witnessed anything. I informed him that I was the first one on the scene and had tried to render assistance -- then mentioned how infuriating it was to have a cop come from nowhere, and without determining what had happened, begin provoking bystanders who were doing nothing wrong. Furthermore, I told him that if I had not been there, his partner likely would have provoked a confrontation which, if it resulted in arrests and injury, would then be characterized as "gang-related activity."

